

Aliant Communications said it completed fiber network to Omaha and Kan. City and joined 8-company consortium linking customers in 18 states. Midwest Carrier Consortium included smaller LECs to create larger network without new construction, company said. Other partners: Ia. Network Services, W. Des Moines; KIN Network, Salina, Kan.; Minn. Equal Access Network Services, Plymouth, Minn.; Northlight Telecommunications, Brookfield, Wis.; NTS Communications, Lubbock, Tex.; S.D. Network, Sioux Falls, S.D.; Touch America, Butte, Mont.

WorldCom said antitrust waiting period for \$2.9-billion acquisition of Brooks Fiber Properties expired, completing last regulatory hurdle facing merger. Brooks shareholders also must approve deal (CD Oct 2 p1), which is expected to close by first quarter next year. Brooks stockholders will get 1.65 shares of WorldCom stock for each share in deal expected to be treated as pooling of interests transaction.

360° Communications agreed to make its 1,700 cellular towers in 15 states available to wireless competitors to ease community pressure. Industry leaders for more than year have encouraged companies to cooperate on antenna siting to reducing requests for tower sites that require community zoning approval.

American Communications Services, Inc. (ACSI) opened 108-mi. fiber network Tues. connecting Washington and Baltimore regions but said its services will be limited to businesses "for now." At news conference in Washington, company announced deal to wire 52 buildings for Manekin real estate company. It said it will bundle local, long distance and data services to Manekin tenants and others, with local service priced 10-15% lower than offerings of Bell Atlantic (BA). Pres.-CEO Jack Reich said "strategically placed" switch will allow ACSI clients to call within network range for price of local call. Company expects Md. PSC to approve "Corridor Calling" within 30 days, Gen. Counsel Riley Murphy said. Reich blamed BA's operational support systems for ACSI's inability to provide residential service, saying price for connecting homes is too high. But he said ACSI is "exploring" offering local service to multidwelling units. BA spokesman Harry Mitchell said Corridor Calling is type of creative service RHC could offer if allowed into long distance. He said competitive LECs' offering such service "points to the inequity that's out there."

CellStar made undisclosed investment in Topp Telecom prepaid cellular phone provider, giving both companies access to international market, they said.

Millicom International Cellular (MIC) formed 2 operating companies: Société Européenne de Communications for Europe and FORA Telecom to focus on Russia and Baltics. Unit will join Sanbao Telecom in Asia, MIC Latin America and GSM Clearing as company is reorganized into 5 operating units.

Telco Systems won contract from Concert Communications MCI-British Telecom joint venture to provide network access service software for expansion of frame relay services for international customers. Terms weren't disclosed, although Pres. William Smith called deal "significant milestone" for company and its first international sale.

Nortel subsidiary acquired 20% share of ArelNet software development company for \$5 million and will be exclusive distributor of fax-by-Internet from Arel Communications unit.

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COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

January 7, 1998

LENGTH: 380 words

HEADLINE: Agency Adopts Order Regarding Applications For Siting Towers On Park Land

BODY:

The Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association (CTIA) applauded the **National Park Service** (NPS) for having recently issued an order that lays out the requirements by which federal park lands controlled by the agency will be made available for the siting of wireless antennas.

The long-awaited order, CTIA said, conforms to section 704(c) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, an August 1995 directive signed by President Bill Clinton and General Services Administration procedures, all dealing with the contentious issue of tower siting. The order delivers a clear message that NPS superintendents must complete an initial evaluation of a carrier's antenna siting application within 60 days of its receipt, according to the wireless trade group.

According to CTIA, the NPS has established an internal task force to develop policies and procedures to facilitate implementation of the latest order. CTIA has requested a meeting with the task force, scheduled to meet in early January, to discuss wireless industry concerns about delays in processing applications and to request that the task force adopt a timetable for processing applications.

Under the agency's order, an NPS superintendent will provide a 30-day window for public comment on an application for the siting of wireless antennas within a U.S. park by publishing a notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the affected area. The superintendent must also publish a similar notice in the Federal Register to notify other FCC licensees authorized to provide the same type of wireless service within the park's boundaries. Notices must be published within 10 days of receipt of a complete tower siting application.

Based on this initial evaluation, the superintendent will within 60 days approve the application, approve it with changes, deny the application while spelling out its deficiencies, or notify the applicant that further evaluation is needed regarding its compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations.

NPS superintendents also may conduct a comprehensive site assessment exploring the feasibility of collocation of antennas, but they are not required to do so under the agency's latest order.

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WASHINGTON TELECOM NEWS

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HEADLINE: Tauzin's Newfound Pot Of Gold Would Eliminate FCC's "Illegal Tax"

BODY:

There appears to be a \$1.7 billion profit to be made over the next five years from **leasing** federal property to wireless carriers for use as **antenna** sites, and House Telecommunications Subcommittee Chairman Billy Tauzin (R-La.) laid claim to it last week.

At a press conference in Washington, Tauzin said he is drafting legislation that would recommend most of the money be used to pay for wiring schools and libraries to the Internet. About \$500 million would be used to pay for technical upgrades that will allow telecommunications carriers to comply with law enforcement agencies' wiretapping needs.

"The illegal tax introduced by the FCC last week should not be the only thing we get out of the '96 Act. We ought to get competition," Tauzin said. "And we ought to get a Universal Service Fund for America that is dedicated to providing services, not capital improvements."

Tauzin was referring to last week's Universal Service Order, in which the FCC created a \$2.5 billion fund to wire schools and libraries and provide discounted telecommunications services (WTN, 5/12/97, pp. 1-2, 4). About half that amount would be used to pay for wiring the schools and libraries, while the other half would cover the discounted services.

...Tauzin's Plan

Tauzin said his legislation would solve three problems. First, it would speed up the buildout process for wireless carriers by expediting **antenna** siting. Second, it would raise \$500 million to pay for technical upgrades that would allow carriers to comply with court-ordered wiretaps. Third, it would provide another alternative to cover the cost of wiring schools.

"This is new revenue to the federal **government**," he explained. House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), who also appeared at the press conference, called Tauzin's financing plan "a marvelous idea." Hyde was especially pleased that the plan could end bickering between the FBI and carriers about financing the upgrades necessary to allow law enforcement officials access to telecom networks for wiretapping.

"The promise of this legislation is that it will produce funding which has been lacking," Hyde said.

...The Remaining Money

Most of the money made from the **lease** arrangements, however, would be used to wire schools to the Internet and for other advanced telecommunications services, Tauzin said.

"In lieu of the FCC's illegal tax, I'm saying we've identified a substantial source of funds [which], when combined with 30 existing grant programs...will cover the cost of wiring schools," he noted.

As part of Tauzin's bill, the FCC would be required to reduce, dollar-for-dollar, what Tauzin calls the "illegal tax."

Many telecommunications companies still are contemplating what action to take regarding the education-related section of the FCC's order. Some Bell operating companies contend that the commission does not have the right to order them to wire schools.

"Inside wiring is not a telecommunications service," said BellSouth Corp. spokesman Bill McCloskey. "The legislation calls for us to provide discounts on telecommunications services. We think a much more efficient way of handling this is through existing Net Day activities--which are working extremely well by the president's own admission."

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